



SENATE
MAJORITY LEADER
KEN SIKKEMA

NEWS RELEASE

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Senate Passes Balanced Budget that Keeps Government Living Within Its Means

The commitment to make tough decisions and not raise taxes was the key

Lansing - The state Senate today finished its work to pass a balanced budget focused on government living within its means while improving education funding and starting the process to reform Medicaid.

"It's time state government learned to live within its means, because that's what the taxpayers of Michigan expect and deserve," said Senate Majority Leader Ken Sikkema. "During tough economic times, families are making difficult decisions every day on how to stretch their dollars. Government leaders should be doing the same thing."

The Senate's 17 budget bills now go to the House for consideration. The Senate and House leadership are discussing how the two chambers will reconcile the Senate's 17 bills with the House's one, omnibus budget bill. Sikkema, R-Wyoming, said working out the logistics will not be an issue.

"I've been saying all along it is what's in the bills that matter," Sikkema said. "Without a doubt this has been the toughest budget cycle in many years. The state simply cannot continue to spend money it does not have and the state's economy is in no condition to ask the taxpayers to give more."

Sikkema said Senate Republicans were united around three general principles as they worked on the budget:

- The state has to start living within its means, which meant cuts in spending were necessary since tax increases were off the table.
- The top priorities for funding were K-12 and universities, with an increase in per-pupil funding for public schools and a minimum floor established for universities that have been historically under-funded.
- Savings had to be found by starting to reform Medicaid, given that so much of the budget is being consumed by that one area of state spending.

"We keep being told we can't balance a \$40 billion budget without raising taxes or severely limiting services for vulnerable citizens, but that's not the case," Sikkema said. "We are dealing with \$40 billion tax dollars and we have a responsibility to make tough choices and spend that money wisely. This week, the Senate showed it takes that responsibility very seriously."

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